

Pending Claims 1-47:

full b1
I claim:

1. A method for facilitating and tracking personal referrals, comprising:
generating a unique identifier that is associated exclusively with the pairing of one individual and one offer;
sending to said individual an electronic-mail message that provides a hyperlink to or contains a Web page whose address or contents includes said unique identifier or a transformation thereof, and
providing in said Web page a means of inputting the electronic-mail address of persons whom said individual wishes to refer.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said unique identifier or a transformation thereof is included in a uniform resource locator.
3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
determining whether said individual has previously been sent an electronic-mail message about said offer.
4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
determining whether said individual has previously opted out of receiving all such electronic-mail messages.
5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
determining whether said individual has previously opted out of receiving electronic-mail messages pertaining to a category of items that contains said offer.
6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
determining the party whose referral caused said offer to be made to said individual and whether said individual has previously opted out of receiving electronic-mail messages pertaining to offers referred by said party.
7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
providing in said Web page a means of accepting said offer.
8. The method of claim 7, further comprising:
notifying the sponsor of said offer in case of an acceptance by said individual.
9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
providing in said Web page a means of opting out of receiving all such electronic-mail messages.
10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
providing in said Web page a means of opting out of receiving electronic-mail messages pertaining to one or more categories of such offers.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing in said Web page a means of opting out of receiving electronic-mail messages pertaining to offers referred by the party whose referral caused said offer to be made to said individual.

12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

determining whether said offer is still valid and substituting the latest version of said offer.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

sending electronic-mail messages to said persons who were referred by said individual

14. An apparatus for facilitating and tracking personal referrals, comprising: a storage device; and

a processor connected to said storage device,
said storage device storing a program for controlling said processor; and said processor operative with said program to:

generate a unique identifier that is associated exclusively with the pairing of one individual and one offer;

send to said individual an electronic-mail message that provides a hyperlink to or contains a Web page whose address or contents includes said unique identifier or a transformation thereof; and

provide in said Web page a means of inputting the electronic-mail address of persons whom said individual wishes to refer.

15. (once amended) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein said processor is further operative to determine whether said individual has previously been sent an electronic-mail message about said offer.

16. (once amended) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein said processor is further operative to determine whether said individual has previously opted out of receiving all such electronic-mail messages.

17. (once amended) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein said processor is further operative to determine whether said individual has previously opted out of receiving electronic-mail messages pertaining to a category of items that contains said offer.

18. (once amended) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein said processor is further operative to determine the party whose referral caused said offer to be made to said individual and whether said individual has previously opted out of receiving electronic-mail messages pertaining to offers referred by said party.

19. (once amended) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein said processor is further operative to notify the sponsor of said offer in case of an acceptance by said individual.

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20. (once amended) The apparatus of claim 14 wherein said processor is further operative to

send electronic-mail messages to said persons who were referred by said individual in the case when said offer is still valid.

21. (new) A method for distributing an offer, the method comprising,
providing at least one database including at least one participant electronic mail address,

generating an electronic mail to the at least one participant that includes at least one of a Web page and a hyperlink to a Web page, the Web page further including data based on the offer, and,

providing in the Web page at least one option for allowing the at least one participant to opt out, accept, and refer.

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22. (new) A method according to claim 21, further including,
receiving at least one selection based on the at least one participant's at least one option, and,
updating the at least one database based on the received at least one selection.

23. (new) A method according to claim 22, further including providing a central controller in communication with the database, the central controller further including instructions for receiving the at least one selection.

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24. (new) A method according to claim 22, further including communicating the at least one selection over a network.

25. (new). A method according to claim 21, wherein providing an offer includes providing at least one of a job offer and employment data.

26. (new) A method according to claim 22, wherein
receiving at least one selection further includes receiving a selection to opt out, and
updating the at least one database includes updating at least one of data associated with the at least one participant and data associated with the offer.

27. (new) A method according to claim 22, wherein,
receiving at least one selection further includes receiving a selection to accept, and,

updating the at least one database includes,
determining whether the offer is valid, and,
updating at least one of data associated with the at least one participant and data associated with the offer.

28. (new) A method according to claim 27, wherein updating the at least one database further includes generating an electronic mail message to an originator of the offer.

29. (new) A method according to claim 22, wherein receiving at least one selection further includes receiving a selection of referral, and, updating the at least one database includes updating at least one of data associated with the at least one participant and data associated with the offer.

30. (new) A method according to claim 29, wherein receiving a selection of referral includes receiving at least one email address based on at least one referral participant.

31 (new) A method according to claim 29, wherein updating the at least one database includes entering into the database as a participant, at least one email address based on at least one referral participant.

32. (new) A method according to claim 29, further including receiving at least one email address based on the at least one referral participant, and, determining at least one of whether the at least referral participant opted out of the offer, the at least one offer is valid, the at least one offer is updated, and, the at least one referral participant previously received the offer.

33. (new) A method according to claim 32, wherein determining whether the at least one offer is updated includes substituting the updated offer.

34. (new) A method according to claim 21, further including updating the at least one database to reflect that the at least one participant received an electronic mail message based on the offer.

35. (new) A method according to claim 21, further including associating with the at least one participant, an identity of at least one referring participant who referred the at least one participant.

36. (new) A method according to claim 21, further including determining whether the at least one participant opted-out of the offer.

37. (new) A method according to claim 21, further including determining whether the offer is valid.

38. (new) A method according to claim 22, wherein receiving the at least one selection further includes receiving an option to opt out and at least one further selection to prohibit any further offers, any further offers in a particular category, and any further offers based on at least one participant referral.

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39. (new) A method according to claim 21, further including providing an offer database having at least one offer.

40. (new) A method according to claim 21, further including associating an identifier with the offer and one of the at least one participant.

41. (new) A method for tracking an offer, the method comprising,
providing a Web page based on the offer, the Web page including at least one option to opt out, accept, and refer,
utilizing a database to determine at least one participant,
sending an electronic mail message to the at least one participant, the electronic mail message including at least one of the Web page and a hyperlink to the Web page,
receiving from the at least one participant, at least one option based on a selection to opt out, accept, and refer, and,
updating the database based on the at least one selection.

42. (new) A method according to claim 41, wherein the offer includes a job description.

43. (new) A method according to claim 41, further including providing an offer database.

44. (new) A method according to claim 41, further including receiving at least one electronic email address based on at least one referral participant.

45. (new) A method according to claim 41, further including identifying a referring participant associated with a selection to accept.

46. (new) A method according to claim 41, further including identifying a participant who opted out based on the offer.

47. (new) A method according to claim 41, further including associating an identifier with the offer and one of the at least one participant.

REMARKS

This Amendment and Response is filed in reply to the Office Action dated March 13, 2001. The issues presented in the March 13, 2001 Office Action are addressed below in numbered paragraphs that correspond to the numbered paragraphs in the Office Action.

1-2. The phrase "with said processor" is a typographical error included in claims 15-20. The phrase is eliminated to correct the typographical error and therefore Applicant traverses the Claim Rejection under 35 USC 112, second paragraph.